

KEY INDICATORS OF PROGRESS TOWARD POSTSECONDARY REFORM

The Council on Postsecondary Education uses five questions to guide postsecondary reform:

1. Are more Kentuckians ready for postsecondary education?
2. Are more students enrolling?
3. Are more students advancing through the system?
4. Are we preparing Kentuckians for life and work?
5. Are Kentucky's communities and economy benefiting?

These questions show the Council's commitment to expand Kentuckians' access to postsecondary education and to ensure that the postsecondary education system improves lives and strengthens communities.

In March 2001, the Council established a set of key indicators to help answer these questions. Currently there are 41 indicators, divided among the five questions. Each indicator provides a specific, measurable objective for postsecondary reform. Some indicators (such as the percentage of Kentuckians with a baccalaureate degree or higher) are broad, systemwide measures. Others (such as retention and graduation rates) are specific to individual postsecondary institutions. The Council staff has worked in consultation with other state agencies and the colleges and universities to establish goals for 28 indicators; the other 13 remain under development. Much of the data related to the key indicators is available to the public via the Council's key indicators web site, <http://www.cpe.state.ky.us/KeyInd/index.asp>.

In March 2002, the Council staff began issuing progress reports on those indicators for which updated information is available. These reports feature a "traffic light" evaluation system designed for the key indicators web site. Where data indicate good progress – on track to meet or have met goals – a green light is assigned. In cases where some progress has been made, but goals will not be met without further improvement, a yellow light is assigned. A red light indicates no progress.

To date, progress has been assessed on 24 systemwide indicators. The results are generally positive. The most recent results show 15 green lights, five yellow lights, and four red lights. Updated measurements of institution-specific indicators yield similarly positive results. The system exceeded or made significant progress toward the majority of the 2002 performance goals.

The Council staff recently began work on the first systematic revision of the key indicators project. The process has two central aims:

Reducing the number of indicators. Streamlining the list of indicators will allow the Council, institutions, and other reform partners to concentrate their efforts on those measurements most central to the public agenda.

Closer alignment with national accountability initiatives. Measurements used by Measuring Up and similar projects were not available when the key indicators were established. Aligning the key indicators with national standards is vital to the broad reform goals of reaching the national average in educational attainment and standard of living.

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Questions Governing Board Members Might Ask

1. Is our institution on course to meet all of its key indicator goals?
2. How are the key indicators integrated into our institutional planning process?
3. For indicators where we have red or yellow lights, what are we doing to get back on track?